



CONGRESSMAN

RUBÉN HINOJOSA  
VETERAN UPDATE

15TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT — TEXAS

SPRING 2002

## A MESSAGE FROM CONGRESSMAN RUBÉN HINOJOSA

*September 11, 2001 brought home to all of us how vulnerable our nation can be and how important it is to maintain a strong defense both at home and abroad. As a new generation of soldiers and sailors place themselves in harm's way to defend freedom and democracy, it is important that we remember those who have made the same sacrifice in the past. Providing our nation's veterans with the health care and services they earned and deserve is one of my highest priorities. We have made some remarkable progress this year, but much work remains to be done. Please be assured that I will continue to fight for your priorities as the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress continues its work.*

*Rubén Hinojosa*



### TRICARE-FOR-LIFE AND PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS

I am pleased to say, that on October 1<sup>st</sup> of last year, Tricare-for-Life went into effect, extending benefits to beneficiaries eligible for Medicare. This was a monumental step in ensuring that veterans have the access to the types of care facilities they need and deserve. For further information about Tricare-for-Life you can call 1-888-DOD-LIFE (1-888-363-5433).

I am also pleased to report that Congress improved the Department of Defense (DoD) Pharmaceutical benefit by giving military retirees enrolled in Tricare their choice of pharmacies. For more information, you can call 1-800-DOD-MEDS.

### SUCCESSES IN THE 1ST SESSION OF THE 107TH CONGRESS: (ALL BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW)

- **The Fiscal Year 2002 Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill** provides the greatest amount of funding for veterans' health care and services in congressional history including a 3.5% Cost-of-Living Adjustment for compensation and pension.
- **H.R. 801** — The Veterans Opportunities Act improves GI bill benefits and increases burial benefits.
- **H.R. 2129** — Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001. Increases survivors' and dependents' educational allowance, expands the definition of Gulf War illness, increases the home loan guaranty and burial and funeral expense benefits.
- **H.R. 2540** — The Veterans Benefits Act of 2001 increases the rates of veterans' disability compensation and compensation for dependents, including Dependency Indemnity Compensation.
- **H.R. 3447** — The Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 provides funding to hire additional VA healthcare staff.
- **H.R. 1696** — A Bill to Expedite Construction of the World War II Memorial in Washington DC.

### THE LATEST NEWS AFFECTING VETERANS



The House budget that was recently approved will provide an historic 12% increase for veterans health care. This additional \$2.8 billion is double what the President proposed and will help fulfill our obligations to provide our veterans with quality health care.

Although the increased health funding is good news, there is one provision in the budget that will adversely affect many veterans and their families. The co-

payment for prescription drugs will be raised from \$2 to \$7. I have cosponsored H.R. 2820 to retract this increase and return the co-payment to \$2 per prescription.

There is also good news for Vietnam veterans affected by Agent Orange. A recent 9th Circuit court decision, *Nebmer v. Veterans' Administration of the United States Government*, affirmed that the VA was bound to provide retroactive benefits to veterans suffering from diseases they believe to have been caused by Agent Orange. All Vietnam veterans or their surviving spouses, who filed a claim based on prostate cancer or diabetes, are urged to contact the VA at 1-800-827-1000 for information regarding the impact of this court decision on their claims.

NEED HELP? WE'RE HERE

If you need help, please contact me. Every day, year in and year out, my capable, dedicated and professional staff works with me to help veterans who have questions relating to health care, benefits, special services, or how to obtain official discharge papers and military awards.

If you need assistance or simply have a question, give my office a call. We stand ready to assist you in any way possible. The McAllen office number is 956-682-5545. In Beeville the number is 361-358-8400.

Thank you for the sacrifices you have made for our great nation.

VETERANS  
DIVIDEND HOAX!

If you receive, or encounter any information about being eligible for a special veterans' payment, disregard it and contact the Department of Veterans Affairs immediately! This is a scam that has existed for thirty-three years. Every so often, individuals seeking to take advantage of the veterans community re-release this information. The notification usually says "Act Now! Act Now!" and may even request a fee from you in order to obtain your "special benefit". Again, DO NOT participate. For further information, contact the VA at 1-800-827-1000.

HELPFUL PHONE LIST FOR VETERANS

Representative Hinojosa	
McAllen .....	956-682-5545
Beeville .....	361-358-8400
VA Benefits .....	1-800-827-1000
Life Insurance .....	1-800-669-8477
Debt Management Center .....	1-800-827-0648
Education Loans .....	1-800-326-8276
Telecommunications	
Device for the Deaf (TDD) .....	1-800-829-4833
CHAMPVA (Insurance) .....	1-800-733-8387
Headstones and Markers .....	1-800-697-6947
Persian Gulf Hotline .....	1-800-PGW-VETS
VA World Wide Net Home Page .....	<a href="http://www.va.gov/">http://www.va.gov/</a>
McAllen Veterans Administration	
Out-Patient Clinic .....	956-618-7100
Audie Murphy VA Hospital .....	210-617-5140
Coastal Bend Veterans Clinic .....	361-854-7392
VA Regional Office .....	713-794-3645

CONCURRENT RECEIPT  
PROBLEM ALMOST OVER

This past year we have finally taken giant strides toward solving the concurrent receipt problem that has offset veterans disability pensions against military retirement benefits to the detriment of veterans and their families. In the Defense Authorization bill passed last year, this offset was eliminated subject to adequate funding. I am pleased to report that the House approved budget has the funding needed to end this offset. As the budget and appropriations process continues, I will fight to make sure the funding remains in the final bill.



*Congressman Hinojosa met with members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8788 honor guard. The honor guard presides at all military funerals in the area.*

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Official Business

Rubén Hinojosa  
M.C.  
PRSRT STD

CURRENT RESIDENT